

ABSTRACT

When a prospective student begins visiting college campuses to start narrowing down their future plans, it can be quite a challenge for schools to make the biggest impact. People are constantly researching what stands out and has the biggest influence on enrollment. The purpose of this study was to determine which of the campus visit options had the biggest influence on the students' decision to attend SFASU. The 3 options were Showcase Saturday, Regular Campus tours or both. Majority attended Showcase Saturday followed by regular campus tours and the rest attended both.

INTRODUCTION

It is recommended, especially when making the final decision, to visit during the academic year and get the full experience of what life would be like at the college (Witte, 2015). Stephen F. Austin State University provides weekly campus tours given my an elite group of students called Jack Walkers. These students truly bleed purple and tell potential students about their experience at the school. Another option to visit campus is through one of the Showcase Saturdays. SFASU offers this open campus opportunity three times every academic year for families to get a feel for everything the university has to offer. College campus visits are crucial to potential students and can truly affect a college's enrollment rate.

METHOD

Quantitative survey research design was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to four different SFA 101 classes, totaling in 62 students. SFA 101 is a freshmen transitions class that is geared towards helping the students adjust to college life. The survey was geared towards freshmen because they will have a fresher memory of what they attended and their decision for attending SFASU. The questions were simple asking if they attended either a campus tour, Showcase Saturday, or both. The questionnaire ended asking the students to compare their visits to school against other they visited.



The Crucial Impacts of College Campus Visits

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RESULTS

Out of the 62 students that took the survey, 32% of students said they did not attend a regular tour or a showcase. This is very interesting because how can someone pick a school without making some kind of visit to where they will be basically spending the next three to four years of their academic life. However, some of these students who did not attend a tour or a showcase said they came to see family or friends that already attend SFA and received an informal tour of the campus.

48% of students attended Showcase Saturday and the students enjoyed it because they learned more about what's happening on-campus. 37% attended the regular campus tour and only 10% answered yes to attending both regular campus tours and Showcase Saturday.

The number was split in regards to which one was their favorite. One student said they enjoyed showcase more because it is exposed more of what is happening on campus. Another said it helped them decide on a major/minor with the help of different academic tables. Those that picked the regular tour as their favorite loved the more one-on-one, personal connection they had on tour. One student said they liked seeing the campus in action on a normal college school day.

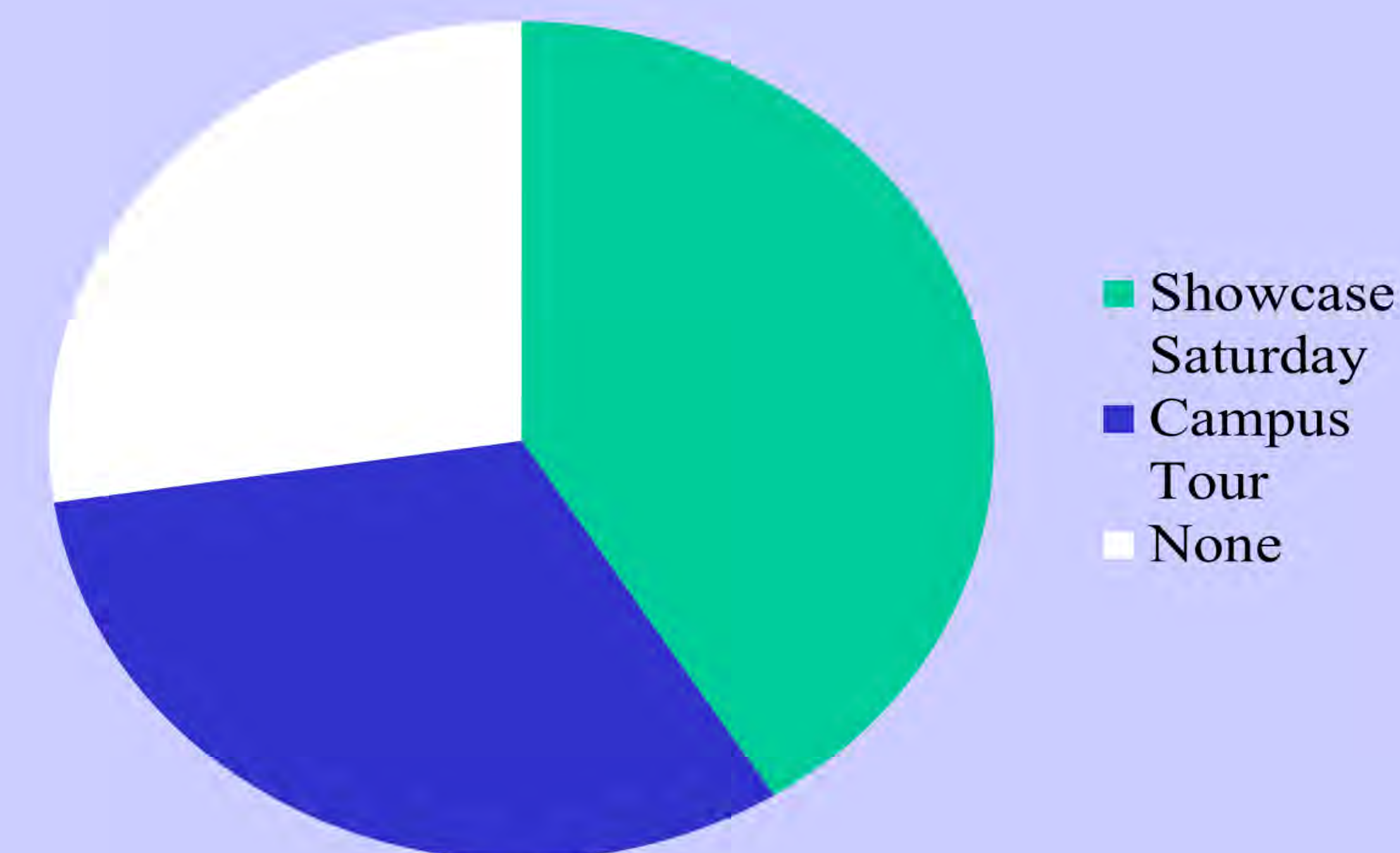
When comparing experiences at SFA against other university visits when trying to select colleges, obviously a majority of the students said they had the best time here. Most comments described their stop as a more welcoming atmosphere and felt like part of a big family. People loved the scenery when walking around and enjoyed the helpfulness they received from all they met. The visits consisted of more involvement and deeper information than what others had provided. One student did not think SFA was as spirited as other schools they visited.

In summary, SFASU need to be regularly comparing their recruitment efforts to other competitors to assess how well they are doing. When schools make potential students and their families feel at home, they are doing their job right.

CONCLUSION

It is important to compare the university against others to see where we stand in student admissions. The trend to make the tours more customized to those visiting has really become a powerful tool to make connections with the students. The spring of a student's junior year is a great time to start visiting colleges if they have already done research, otherwise fall of senior year is the best time (Schneider, Z., Schneider, G. N., 2002). SFASU needs to target students at the right time and with a great first impression when they visit campus. The decision of where to attend college can be a difficult struggle for many juniors and seniors in high school. Schools all over try to find ways to make an impact on the students and sway their opinion. It would be interesting to have another study asking students how they heard about the school. For example, why would someone apply without much knowledge of the school?

CHART



QUESTIONNAIRE

Did you attend a Showcase Saturday? Yes No

Did you enjoy the showcase? What was your favorite part?

Did you go on a regular weekly campus tour? Yes No

Did you enjoy the tour? What was your favorite part?

If you attended both, which would you say had the bigger impact on you? Why?

Would you say one or both of these were a deciding factor in you attending SFA versus another university?

How did SFA compare to other university tours/showcases?

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